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Official quest for 'another reality'

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For 10 years at the end of his Army career, Joseph McMoneagle says, he dressed in civilian clothes, rarely saluted and went to work most days in a numberless, converted mess hall at Fort Meade, Md.

Neither his wife nor his closest companions had any inkling of his mission. Only his immediate superiors knew that he was part of a highly classified group of psychics that the federal government paid to conjure up the whereabouts of friend and foe alike — literally.

"No one knew anything, so nobody really asked questions," said McMoneagle, now retired and living in Nelson County.

This week, the heavyset 49-year-old former intelligence officer is embarking on a highly visible publicity campaign intended to preserve the dignity of his little-known unit and to buttress the murky scientific basis beneath it.

"People are trashing 20 years of scientific work. It's unconscionable," he said yesterday.

On network television last night, in interviews and in a one-hour special scheduled tomorrow night on ABC, McMoneagle is trying to champion a little-understood, still-

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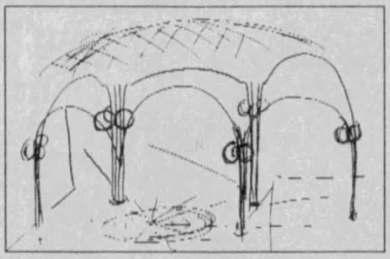

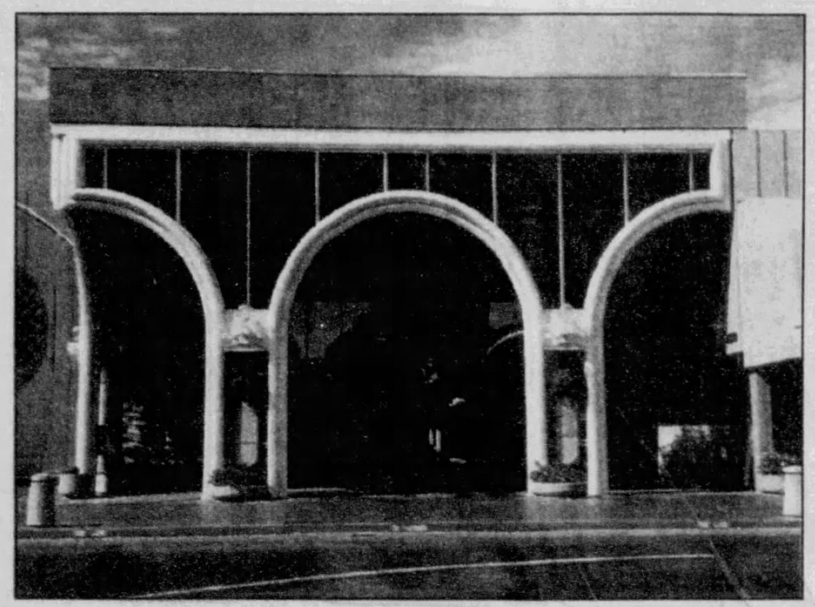

A VISION. In a demonstration for scientists four years ago, Joseph McMoneagle drew an image (above) when asked to visualize where a person could be found. The actual location was a shopping mall (right) in Palo Alto, Calif.

SRI-INTERNATIONAL

Crystal ball had a place next to cloak and dagger

▼ **PSYCHIC** *FROM PAGE A1*

secret military intelligence program that he says has wrongly become a target of ridicule.

Disbanded only recently, according to McMoneagle, the team of psychics with "remote viewing" abilities fell into disfavor as the military began recruiting people from the private sector that McMoneagle describes as too zealous and too warped by a blind belief in their abilities.

"Things were getting sort of goofy," he said.

Instead of using known psychic abilities for specific suitable objectives, the military tried to adapt their abilities to inappropriate missions. "They began putting the cart before the horse," he said.

McMoneagle

Revelations that the Army, CIA and other government agencies used psychics "will floor a lot of people," McMoneagle said.

"There will be some people who will be very offended . . .

"But it's amazing how people will simply not believe that there is another reality out there beyond the one they see in the mirror."

A CIA spokesman confirmed the use of the psychics yesterday, according to The Associated Press, which also quoted researchers who said the government spent as much as $20 million over two decades. Missions ranged from psychic searches for Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi to searches for plutonium in North Korea.

McMoneagle was one of the major players in the project and continued working for the government on a contract basis long after his 1984 retirement.

Code named "Stargate," the psychic team was so secret that a Legion of Merit awarded to McMoneagle describes it only as "a unique intelligence project that is revolutionizing the intelligence community."

McMoneagle is going public in response to studies that are labeling the project as ineffective.

Tomorrow night on the taped ABC special, McMoneagle gives an eerily specific description of a location in Houston after he's shown a picture of a woman located there. He had never been in the Texas city.

A news release describes McMoneagle's performance as "one of the most spectacular demonstrations of paranormal abilities ever presented on netwrok television. . . . His performance should create a sensation."

It's hardly old hat to the Miami native — even he was stunned by the accuracy of his taped television appearance — but he said he gained a reputation as one of the military's best practitioners of the art.

His involvement, many details of which are still secret, never fit a cloak-and-dagger image, much less one of a roadside palm reader.

He did his job in a Spartan office decorated with nothing more than a drawing of the crab nebula that he did himself; he made standard Army wages of $2,500 a month.

"I lived in the barracks; got up and showered and got dressed and went to work," he said.

Even major missions rarely amounted to anything more than being handed an envelope with a picture of someone and trying to sense a related location.

Failures as learning experiences

"We'd go out on the town when we had a good day," McMoneagle said. Failures were regarded as learning experiences, examples of improper sensory interpretation.

The loneliness of the job destroyed marriages and ruined careers, said McMoneagle, who lasted longer than most. "I really have the feeling that I was doing something to help our country; I had a real sense that what I was doing was important."

McMoneagle enlisted in the Army after high school and was a chief warrant officer when he retired, frustrated by the isolation his job demanded and by the disrespect traditional intelligence operatives held for the band of remote viewers.

There was nothing unusual about secretiveness in the intelligence community, McMoneagle said. "But to be suddenly and totally compartmented away for something so abnormal is to hear the death knell."

During the Iranian hostage crisis, McMoneagle and other viewers were asked to look at black-and-white pictures of people known to be inside the American Embassy, McMoneagle said.

'We were quite accurate'

From those, the viewers were able to develop psychic images of the embassy's damaged interior, land mine locations and other data.

"We were quite accurate, it turned out," McMoneagle said, stressing that the psychic intelligence was never relied on exclusively.

Since his retirement, McMoneagle has worked with scientists studying the paranormal, notably at the Cognitive Sciences Lab of SRI-International in California, which once was associated with Stanford University.

He also operates Intuitive Intelligence Applications, a consulting company. Clients have ranged from individuals looking for relatives to petroleum companies looking for reserves.

In a recently released book about his experiences, "Mind Trek," McMoneagle traces his ability to a near-death experience in 1970 and then charts the gradual development of his remote viewing powers.

It's been a remarkable path.

"I wouldn't do it again for $10 million, but you couldn't pay me $30 million for the experience," said McMoneagle, who spends $5 a week on the lottery but so far hasn't hit the jackpot.

"I use whatever numbers come to mind," he chuckled.